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Turner Says Congress Units Were Told of All Covert Intelligence Actions

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WASHINGTON, March 18 — Adm. Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, said today that he had never withheld knowledge of covert American intelligence operations from Congressional committees authorized to receive such reports.

But Admiral Turner, testifying before the House Intelligence Committee, said that one reason that he firmly opposed a legal obligation to give prior notice of such clandestine actions to the committees was that it would permit Congress to make an "excessive intrusion" into Presidential decision making.

Admiral Turner argued that the requirements of Congressional oversight would be fully met if the authorized committees learned of covert operations only after they were completed and if they received "sufficient information to allow a judgment as to legality and propriety."

Disclosure Threat as Veto

The head of the Central Intelligence Agency said, "Every individual with access to prior notification would have the power to veto the activity through a threat to disclose it."

Admiral Turner told the House Committee today that his testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Feb. 21 had been "seriously misrepresented in the press." News accounts centered on his statement that it was "not correct" that at least some members of Congress had been informed of all covert actions by the C.I.A.

He went on to say that in the last three years, all covert actions except one were described to authorized committees before being carried out. He said that in the case of the exception, Congress was notified within hours "of the risks being behind us." Other informed sources said that the exception was the case of six Americans who were spirited out of Iran with the help of the Canadian Embassy.



United Press International
Stansfield Turner appearing before the House panel on intelligence.

While Admiral Turner said today that the press was to blame for misinterpreting his February remarks to the Senate committee, Senate sources said that he had told the Senate committee in closed session that he had not understood the question that led to his controversial answer, and thus admitted that he had given a misleading response. He told the

House committee today that only in closed, secret session could he fully explain his answer to the Senate committee.

Representative Les Aspin, Democrat of Wisconsin, said that he was "very disturbed" by Admiral Turner's testimony. Mr. Aspin said Congress did not have and did not seek a veto power on covert operations. Prior notification, he said, would require intelligence agency planners to justify ideas that sometimes "mesmerize" those involved in undercover work but seem "crazy" to anyone else.

He cited a plan that was once advanced within the C.I.A. to give a disease-infested diving suit to Cuba's leader, Fidel Castro.

Admiral Turner responded that "what you have just described is a process of in-

volving Congress in decision making" because it involved a Congressional effort to achieve "better decisions."